

EI-768/PARACHINI

EI-768

MARY (MARIA) ISTRIA PARACHINI

BIRTH DATE: MAY 8, 1901

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 19, 1996

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:15

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

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HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 10/1997

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ITALY, 1917

AGE 16

PASSAGE ON "THE DANTE ALIGHIERI"

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many
8. interviews conducted with Italian and Sicilian women, was
generously provided by interviewee Elda Del Bino Willitts, EI-
Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 8/14/1997.

LEVINE: Okay. Today is the 19th of July, 1996. And I am
Parachini. here in Hackensack, New Jersey, with Mary
Mrs. Parachini came to the United States as
Maria . . .

PARACHINI: Istria.

LEVINE: . . . Istria.

PARACHINI: Yeah.

LEVINE: When she was sixteen years of age, in 1917. So
that makes you ninety-five years old.

PARACHINI: Yes, I was, in May.

about
LEVINE: Yes. And you look wonderful. You look wonderful.
And I want to, I'm going to start by asking you
your life in Italy.

in
PARACHINI: Yeah. And you want me to share, I started, I come
in this country . . .

LEVINE: Well, first let's talk about Italy. First give me
your birth date. What was the day you were born?

PARACHINI: May 8, 1901.

LEVINE: '01. Uh-huh. And where in Italy were you born?
Just relax.

PARACHINI: That's a small village.

LEVINE: Okay.

PARACHINI: And they call it Camania[ph], Camania
Monferrato[ph].

The nearest city is Cazzali[ph], the secondary, you
know? And the province is Alessandria[ph].
Alessandria[ph].

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why don't you just sit back and relax,
and we'll have a nice little talk.

PARACHINI: I never, I never relax. I always stay, always.

LEVINE: (she laughs) Okay. So, now, did you live in the

to
same place, in that little village, did you live
there right up until you were sixteen and you came
the United States?

how
PARACHINI: Till sixteen. And you want to know how I start,
suggest me to come here?

LEVINE: Well, first let me ask you, like, up until you were
sixteen, tell me about your life. What kind of a
life did you have in Italy?

PARACHINI: In Italy, in Italy my father, he was in
agriculture,
very, very, the best one, you can say, in the
place.
So he have quite a few vineyard. You know, we have
to go to work, you know. And I don't like to go to
work in the vineyard, you know, I don't like to
work.

LEVINE: You don't?

PARACHINI: No. So, but I was going to work, you know. So . . .

LEVINE: What were you doing, like, when you went to work in
the vineyard, what did you do?

PARACHINI: Oh, what you do? You plant the seeds and this or
that, and beans, tomatoes, carrots, whatever, you
know, whatever you have to eat, you know. But they

hill,

cooked it, the grapes, they used to make wine. The only resource we have was knowing those three. No, not, because it was a very small village on the

put

you know. So we have, the wine to sell in the end, yeah. When we pick the grapes in the end of September, then they make the wine, and then you

and

them, not in the bottle, a big bag, and you keep it clean until you've got to, somebody come, taste,

you

if they like it, you sell the wine, you know? So then, that's why you got a few dollars. That's,

a

know, you got no resource. My father used to have

to

little horse, like a pony horse, and he used to go

the

the city. The people used to hire the horse with

say,

carriage, and they used to make, you know, pay,

go

to go Cazzali[ph] then, it was three lire, and to

my

Alessandria was four lire. In fact, some time they used to go both place in one day, the people I, you know, I'm talking about when I was very young, and

to

brother used to be older than me. That's, he used

go with the horse, you know, with the people, you

know. And that's how we always have a few dollars,

a

like, not dollars, lire. But we have, well, it was good life if you like, you know. But, uh, so I was going to stay there, and then . . .

LEVINE: Well, tell me your father's name.

PARACHINI: Francesco, Frank.

LEVINE: And his name was Istria.

PARACHINI: Istria, yeah.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

PARACHINI: Angela, Angelina, Angela Cattna.

LEVINE: Is that C-A-T . . .

PARACHINI: C-A-T-T-N-A.

LEVINE: Okay.

PARACHINI: My mother's maiden name.

Italy?

was

in the army, you know, in the First World War. And my sister, she was a couple of years older, she was not home. So she went, see, my father bought a sewing machine, a Singer sewing machine, because they

used to make clothes for the soldier. So it was a
tailor, he said to my father, he said, "Frank,"
like,
you know, "if you buy the machine, I make you, you
know, you pay for it, like I use your horse and,
you
know, you pay, you pay the machine with that." So
then my father have three girls then, my father and
mother. And then when we bought the machine, the
company have, they gave a chance for one daughter
of
the family to go and learn how to use the machine.
So, and then my sister was the older one, so she
went. She went a couple of weeks Cazzali, you
know,
was like a place for the, to learn how to use the
machine. And then it snow, instead two weeks, she
stay a month. All right. So, and then, then we
was,
one day we was working in the vineyard. Near home
was a vineyard my father having, near home. And he
told me, he said, "Maria," he said, "some day I got
to write to Uncle Angelo." Because my uncle, my
great uncle, my mother's uncle, he was here, and he
was very close to my mother, because there was not
too much difference of age. He used to be very
close. He used to come often. Because his family
come one, like me, first one, then all the family.
So my uncle was here, he said, "Some day I got to
write to Uncle Angelo, and you want to say a few

words?" That's what make the picture, you know. I
say, "All right." So after lunch, it was in the
dining room, he wrote the letter, he got it right.
Then he come in the kitchen, it was wash the
dishes,
and he say, "All right, Mommy. I finish. You want
to go to write?" I said, "Oh." I dry my hands,
and
i went to write. I didn't see what my father
write,
you know, he was not a lot, not even think, you
know,
it was not our business, you know? So, and, uh,
nobody was next to me to dictate, to tell me what
to
say. So I say, "Dear Angelo, Dear Uncle." I said,
"I'm a niece, Maria, age sixteen." I say I was
sixteen because before I was ready, you know. So I
said I was sixteen. "Tell me what to do. I want
to
come in America. I want to come in America." So
my
father read the letter, he didn't say, "Why you
read," you know, write the letter, why. He close
the
letter, and he mailed it. Pass one week, pass two
weeks, and three weeks, then he used to take time,
you know. I want to say this guy, he forget all
about me. One day we was going back to, we used to
start to learn how to sew. We used to go to a lady
to, you know, to start, to make a trousseau.

LEVINE: Oh!

PARACHINI: So we was going back from lunch, we just left the home, and I saw the mail man's son, Alla[ph].

"Istria, Istria, ten cents fine." (they laugh)

Because my uncle, he make the affidavit, supposed.

Then I find out after, you know. It was too late

to

mail it, and he, you know, it was a big thing, you

know. He put a regular stamp, five cents stamps

then, and he mailed it, because the post office was

closed. So when it get there, we have to pay ten

cents fine. So the guy, Alla[ph], ten cents fine.

So we went back, me and him, because it was, say,

like this from there, and so I give it to my

father.

My father read the letter. And my father was tall,

I

was short, and I look. And I saw something. Then

after he read the letter he look down, he say, "You

really wants to go in America?" And I say, "Yeah."

He doesn't say boo. So I start, because he used to

go, I only went for the picture. Otherwise that,

you

know, all the people, they went, because I was a

minor, like. So my sister got to go another place

where's my grandmother was born. See, the mother

of

my uncle was born. You have to get that name. So

my

sister went to pick it up. And then so, and they
make a paper, so then I got that then. I got
ready,
so I went for the, for the picture take, you know,
the picture.

LEVINE: For the passport picture.

PARACHINI: Yeah. And, uh, then we left, we supposed to leave
March 1st, and then we went to Genoa and there was
a
coal,
strike in the coal. So, and then we, so in the
we can't leave. So my father says if I know when
they leave I can stay here, but he don't know the
I
strike, how long it last. I say, "I go home, then
come back, I know I don't come back. You know, it
was too far." So we stayed there ten days. After
ten days we left. Dante Alighieri. That's the
name
of the boat. The man, he formed the Italian
language, Dante Alighieri. That's the name of the
boat.

LEVINE: Were you traveling by yourself?

PARACHINI: I was, a lady was introduced to my father in the
agency when we went to the agency, next town was an
agency for the, you know. And my father went there
for something, and this lady, she was there, was

she
and
coming from another town, she have two daughters,
was going to come and meet her husband, daughter
a son, they was going to go Bridgeport. So I was
under supervision, you know.

LEVINE: Now, how did your mother and father feel about you
going to America?

side,
called
say
with
father
PARACHINI: My father, the day before, he called me on one
and he said, my mother, she was full, so congest,
like, she can't, she can't talk, she can't say now.
She was crying, my mother. But my father, he
me to one side, and he said, "Maria," he said,
"you're going to America." He said, "Remember, you
might find somebody offer you money." He didn't
for what, but my aunt was, you know, that's stupid.
So he said, "Remember to be always a good girl." I
was a good girl even if he didn't tell me, but, you
know, my father told me that. And then he told me,
too, he said, "You know there is a war going on
the Germans, this and that?" I say, "Yeah, sure."
"Suppose this boat be, you know, sunk, with the
submarine, you know, this. Who you blame?" my
asked me. He wants to know, you know. "Who you
blame?" I say, "I don't blame nobody." That's

when
couple

destiny. That's a suggestion from God. Nobody
never, we never talked for me to go in America the
way I told you, you know. So here I am, and we
takes. So we left the March 10, yeah. And we,
we reached the (?), we stopped for coal for a
of days, and then we pick up, you know, the voyage
again, and we get here I think the 26th.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was your father satisfied with your answer
about who would you blame if . . .

PARACHINI: He didn't say nothing.

LEVINE: He didn't say anything.

letter,
don't
letter.

PARACHINI: He didn't say nothing. Like when he read the
when I ask my uncle, he read the letter. If he
want me to go, he say, he don't even make the
He making out the letter, or he say, "Why you say
that?" He didn't say boo. And that's it. Here I
am.

LEVINE: What did you know about America? Before you ever
came here, what was your . . .

You

PARACHINI: No, I never came here. But, now my daughter's
mother-in-law, that's the daughter of my uncle.

know, he make the Affidavit of Support for me. So
and she stop, and she marry a third cousin, you know,
and about so on. She came here before, like me. She was
sixteen. I don't know what year that one, because
she was ten years older than me. I remember my
and mother once, I was about six years old, and she ask
me, say, "Maria, you want to come with me?" I go
see Aunt Marietta, because this morning Ernestina,
first that's the daughter, left for America, was the
one came in this country. And my uncle don't have
from nobody family here. But he had some friend of,
another town, live here. And he wrote to this
friend, he says, "So and so, my daughter got there,
doll, go and pick her up." And she was a, she was a
was you know, sixteen years old, blonde, curly. She
the first one to come here.

LEVINE: Do you remember that when you were six years old?

PARACHINI: Yeah. That's my mother, she told me, she said,
"You want to come with me? I got to Aunt, you know."
It was not too far, you know. I said, because her
daughter left, and she (?), you know. So we went

there, we stay over there, and she left in the morning. And then I think after one year, a son was come like an agent to go in the army, like, you know. After a year or so, she called a brother. And then, and then they call, after they would see her, they call the mother and two sons, yeah. And then they call the father, that's my uncle, and the last son. And she call everybody. So I did, I came here in, uh, 1917, and 1921 I call, I call my sister, because I know through somebody came down, I went to see them, they knew my mother, and said, "Oh, by the way, when your sister come?" I said, "I didn't know nothing. She never mentioned nothing." I say, "I don't know when come." And she say, "But she said that soon she's going to be here, too." So on the way to work, when I left this friend and I went to work, I went in the bank, and I make a money order, and I send the money for her. And I didn't send to her, because if I send it to her, my father was afraid, you know, he buy property, like, he don't use it for, for her. I send it to an aunt. And I said, and we blame, we send the money through a cousin who went home from here. So, and, uh, I said to my aunt,

If
when
that,
San
not

"Here the money for my sister." I said, "If my father gave me the money, all right. If my father gave the money, you put this in the bank for me. my father says he don't want to give the money, you know, to pay the trip, and then he use it. So, my father here, say, "Oh, he going to America." He say, "Are you going?" I said, "Well, don't worry about that." She was drunk, because she knew the money was laying to my aunt. So when he hears he paid the expenses, so she came 1921. I know, he don't want. Her or my husband, they come through Giovanni and San Giorgio, two boat. But they was big as . . .

LEVINE: As the Dante . . .

Savoy

PARACHINI: As the Dante Alighieri, you know, like Conta de when they went home, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

PARACHINI: So, uh . . .

LEVINE: Tell me what your father was like. How do you remember your father from when you were a little girl?

PARACHINI: Oh, my father, he was a very hardworking man, very. He was going to church, you know. He was, uh, very family, good family man. We used to, my father used to, my mother used to make a little stew, like, with the rabbit. She used to raise the rabbit, you know, because we don't have the money always to go to the butcher that time, you know? And so she used to raise the rabbit. So when she used to make the, you know, the dish, we used to eat one meal, then it was something left over, and so I used to say, "Give it to this, to the children." And he used to eat plenty of salada, salad, and my mother used to make polenta. it Some time she cook hard boiled eggs, and you smash in the salad, it give it a little flavor. And that's, we eat very, very, uh, you know, plain, plain. A lot of fruit, a lot of vegetable. We used to have a nice, old, we used to call Bella Vista. It was the best home in the town, I tell.

LEVINE: What did the town . . .

PARACHINI: I have pictures now . . .

LEVINE: When we finish you can show me. But what did the town look like?

PARACHINI: Huh?

LEVINE: What was the town? What did the town look like?

PARACHINI: Oh, my town, I used to have a postcard when I moved here. They took, you know, I guess my daughter take it. It was a very small town in here. When I used to go to school they used to say, you know, they used to say, "My town in a place like in a colina[ph], in a colina[ph]," like in the mountain, like, you know? Between the two lake, you know, Rotado[ph] and thousand Grana[ph]. But it was very, not even three people in my own town where I was born. Another thing. When I left to go to the train, I leave, I said was leaving the town to come here, and my father to me, there was still a chance to see, he said to me, "Maria, turn back once more you can see the church bell once more, because God know when you're going to see him again." I remember this thing. So, and I went back after ten years, married with my daughter, two years old, and my husband. I went home. May 28th, and I come back October 4, 1927.

America
LEVINE: Do you remember anything you took with you to
that
that first time when you were sixteen, anything
you brought with you when you . . .

you
PARACHINI: When I brought here from the other side, I guess,
know,
know, a couple of dress, I guess, and shoes, and
underwear. I know they brought the valise, you
supervise
the suitcase. Because it was, we went in third
class, because that lady, you know, she was
me, she went in third class. My father said to me,
"Look, I was going to pay you in second class, but
you got to go with this lady." So we went in third
class. So we used to bunk bed, you know, there was
a
and
lot of people there. So they bring the suitcase,
they took everything. In fact, I have a couple of
to
polo shirt, my uncle likes to have, and he told me
they
buy and bring them over, and they took it. And
took a razor, somebody gave it to me to bring it to
their son here, and they took it. So that's all I
remember.

LEVINE: Where did they break into the suitcase? Where did
they take the suitcase?

PARACHINI: Where they take it?

LEVINE: Where?

PARACHINI: In the cabin.

LEVINE: Oh, they went into the cabin.

PARACHINI: It was like a basement.

LEVINE: Oh, it was like steerage, with a big . . .

PARACHINI: Oh, like two, three hundred, you know. I know.

Who

knows. So they break the suitcase and they take

the

things. I haven't got much, but anyway they on the way. Money, no. Money, no, because my father, he give the money to her to hold that money if I need something on the trip.

LEVINE: Right.

PARACHINI: Then I didn't leave, I didn't see her no more after

we left the boat. I went to the Customs, and they gave me a book. I remember it was a big, it was a big counter like a bank, you know, around. They

send

me to, you know, that place. There was a man, he lent me a book, Italian book, to read, and I start

to

read. I was going like fast, and he said, "Basta, basta. That's enough!" (they laugh)

LEVINE: So you passed . . .

PARACHINI: I remember, I remember.

LEVINE: So you passed the reading test.

PARACHINI: Eh?

LEVINE: You passed the reading test.

PARACHINI: Uh, passed. He said, "That's enough, that's
enough."

Because, because if somebody in alphabet, they
don't
like to pass.

LEVINE: What else do you remember about the examinations,
about Ellis Island?

PARACHINI: I don't have no examination in Ellis Island,
because
they examine in the boat. They give you a vaccine,
and there was a doctor. It was nice and clear.
And,
see, you have no examination in the Customs.

LEVINE: Do you remember . . .

PARACHINI: I remember I sleep one night, because I told you we
get there after, must be after five, and they did
work on the dock, so we sleep no the boat, and then
in the morning we, we, I don't know, far from . . .

LEVINE: From Battery Park, in New York.

I

PARACHINI: Yeah. But I remember I see a lot of lot of light.

say, "Oh, my God." In the town there was such a small, you know, light.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about Ellis Island, anything that you remember besides the, uh, reading test?

there,

PARACHINI: They don't give you nothing, no. When you get

you just pass the reading, and then you come out.

you're

That's the last. Because if you reach there,

don't,

all right, because otherwise they don't, they

you know, keep you there.

LEVINE: Right. Did somebody meet you at Ellis Island?

uncle.

PARACHINI: Yeah, this uncle, my great uncle, my mother's

like

It was seven years he was here. So when he was, I

was in the case, it must be, and he was outside,

uncle."

on the window. And I remember I show him, so they

ask me, "You know, this man?" "Yes, he's my

"What's the name? How old he is? How many years

he's here?" What else they said? So that's my

mother uncle, come to, he asked me a lot of

questions, and then, and then they let me off.

That's the last.

LEVINE: And where did you go with your uncle when they let you in?

PARACHINI: Oh, my uncle, I went to his house, 37th Street, New York, you know . . .

LEVINE: West? West 37th, right?

PARACHINI: Uh, New York, Ninth Avenue.

LEVINE: Ninth Avenue, uh-huh.

PARACHINI: It was the elevated. I remember. When I came down the elevated 34th Street, I saw two, three store, vegetable and fruit store, and I said, "My God, I thought there was nothing here." (she laughs)

And

I see apple, orange, all the fruit. And my uncle

was

living 37th Street, 340 37th Street near Ninth

son,

Avenue, but he can't keep me because he have two

unmarried. One he was working Connecticut in the

He

silver, you know. And one he was a waiter, he was

working Philadelphia. So they used to come home.

the

used to have three room, uh, say the bedroom and

kitchen and, say, if you want to call a living

room,

but he got two single beds. So I was there for a

still
look
once
"Why
was
we

while, but I can't stay there, no. And then my
cousins always the same one, the one she come here
first. She was living 43rd Street, and she was
going in the drugstore on 40th Street. It was an
Italian drugstore. And that teller, he used to
for a girl to mind the children, you know. And
he said, when she went there, he told her about it,
and he said, "Oh, my cousin come from Italy." She
was here, and I was just get here. And he said,
don't you bring her over?" So we went there, it
three blocks. We went there, so, and the next day
went home, and I stayed there three years. But not
only mind children, do everything.

LEVINE: Housework?

PARACHINI: Except wife. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. (break in tape)

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PARACHINI: In three years I never went out, believe me or not.
I went, I came down I think once. I don't think
twice, I'm not sure. But once, I remember, I come

and

down to the city to see my cousin and, you know,

lady

that's all. And then I came back to the city. My aunt was working in the Biltmore Hotel, keep the locker clean, sparkle, for you, whatever, they help people going to change where the locker was, the

know,

go to change, you know. So, keep the sink, you

work,

sparkle. Oh, she was something, out of this world, for cleaning. So she, she make me go there and

Any,

you know. She look for a job for me, and I work nearly three years in the Biltmore Hotel. First we was served a hundred and fifty men, chef, cook, you know. The big chef, small chef, vegetable man.

his

any, all the room, was hundred and fifty. It was three girls. (she laughs) And then, you know, these men, they take advantage when there's young girl. He used to, there was one friend, he used to say something once, and I don't like it. I don't like it. I took a platter there, and knock it on

He

head. (she laughs) And it break the platter.

a

got so embarrassed. And another time another guy,

took

small guy, he was working in the kitchen, too, I don't know what he was saying, and so I have a,

was a, it was a beer bottle there, I don't know if it
no full or empty, I give it across that, I don't want
be. nonsense. I want serious. I was serious as can
shot So, sure, they complain to the big shot, the big
He come up with him at first. He was Italian Swiss.
told come up, he ask what's wrong, what happened. I
then him. So I guess if he got out it was, you know,
kitchen three young girls working with two many men. So
I was a storeroom girl, make the appetizer, the
and salad, and I serve the cook. All the waiter, they
used to holler the order, and we used to make it
serve all the kind, you know. And then once I, I,
uh, I make the breakfast time, you know, different.
But, anyway, we work together two-and-a-half years.
And then I left there because my sister was out,
she was make a few dollars more, you know? So I went
to work in the Automat. You know, there was a lot of
Automat.

LEVINE: On 42nd Street?

PARACHINI: Not, no, I didn't work on 42nd Street. Broadway,
in

near
It
another
another
you
was

the cafeteria. You know, not on the floor, no bus girl, no like pick it up. Just inside making sandwich, making salad, making, you know. I was the elevator, used to see when the stuff come in. was everything excellent. They used to have a vegetable soup, wonderful. Every day change the menu. One day roast lamb, roast leg of lamb, day Virginia ham, another day roast chicken, day, every day change. Everything clean, every, know, and I worked there until, until 1924 when I a, I was married, I got married, I think, '23.

before

LEVINE: Did you ever hear of anything like the Automat you came?

never

PARACHINI: Before I came where? In this country? No. I eat, until I went there. But there's a lot of Automat, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, there were, right.

PARACHINI: Yeah. There was one on 42nd Street, near Bryant Park, big. Now it's no more.

LEVINE: No. But the idea of putting the money in and

getting . . .

PARACHINI: Yeah. But I never, I never use. No, I never take that stuff in the machine, you know. I used to . . .

LEVINE: Because you were in the back.

PARACHINI: I used to be in the food business.

LEVINE: Right, right.

PARACHINI: You know.

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband?

PARACHINI: (she laughs) I used to have a friend. She was married. And she had a sister, she have a restaurant, on 29th Street. So, and she, and she used to have a friend that was going to go there, and he used to play piano, he used to play all instrument. In fact, they used to call him Mandolin, because he play everything. Without, he never studied music, I guess. But, anyway, he used to play. So she say once, she say, "Why don't, you never come out, you never go no place, work and go home. Why don't you come with me some time? You can come with me to my sister. She's got a restaurant." So one night, I think it was my sisters, too, and we

with
happened

went. So we went there, we went there, and after,
after the job, you know. And he was, this lady
the baby was two years old, and there was a young
man, it was, you know, it was a cousin that
to be my husband. So, and her husband, he was the
piano, you know, the one he was playing, so. So
after when I got there we used to dance, you know.
(she laughs) And then, so we danced once, and we
danced twice, and then he walked me home, from 29th
Street to 37th Street.

LEVINE: Were you back with your great uncle?

PARACHINI: Huh?

LEVINE: Were you living with your great uncle again?

PARACHINI: No, I was a boarder.

LEVINE: Oh, you were a boarder. Uh-huh.

PARACHINI: Yeah, I was a boarder to a family, with a family.
No, my younger, you know, I was, you know.

LEVINE: And he walked you home.

"I
PARACHINI: So he walked me home, I told my daughter, I said,
have a man, but when he say goodnight he kiss me on
the cheek on the stoop." He didn't come up. The

first time he say, and you talk about us. (she
laughs) The first time he walk you home, and so
on.

And then we went another time there, and this lady,
she the one she got the baby, she said to my friend,
said, "You know, your friend is just fit for my
cousin." He was a first cousin to her. He was (?)
there, and I was working, you know. So, uh, what
they call, his (?) said . . .

LEVINE: He called? He wanted to see you again?

PARACHINI: And then, after a while, and then when he, you
know,
when I was working he used to come and wait for me.
And he used to, some time he used to say he don't
work.
come, you know, and pick me up, you know, from
But on the way home, I work on Broadway, one block,
and then I get, you know, on the way home . . .

LEVINE: Wait, just . . . I guess they went away.
pick
(referring to noise outside room) I'm sorry. So
he, you, sometimes he wouldn't come to work and
you up.

PARACHINI: No. He used to come, but he didn't tell me. So he
used
test me, like, you know, he come. I remember I
to see the moon, you know, when I used to work. I

know, used to see the pizza, you know, the moon, you
He on the ground, and then it was him, and he left.
sure, was following me, like. That's it. He was not
go you know, if I have somebody else, like. We don't
on too much. And we get married in August, you know,
August 4, 1923. So.

LEVINE: And your husband's name?

Pasquale, PARACHINI: My husband's name? Well, from Italy it was
but when he came here, you know, he changed, Lino,
short. L-I-N-O.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was he from, did you know him, or did
anybody know his family in Italy?

PARACHINI: Oh, I didn't know the family before, no. I know,
went after I went home, 1927, when we was married we
when home together. Only the father and mother died
he was young, very young. In fact, he have a
stepmother, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. When you first got married, where did you
go? Where did you move to?

PARACHINI: Where I live, I live in the same apartment where I

am. Oh, when my sister came, she don't like to be
the boarder, you know. She was not too young, she
was about twenty-three or twenty-four. So, and my
uncle said, "Look, so-and-so cousin, he go to
Europe,
and it would be all right for you two if you could
take that apartment, but he wants to sell the
furniture." So, anyway, we bought the furniture,
and
we took the apartment. It was 4, 449 on 37th
Street.
So we lived there, me and my sister. And then when
I
start to know him, you know, my sister stayed with
me
three weeks, because after three weeks she got
married, too. She came down, when we went to city
all to get married, she said, she said, "Joey wants
to come to see how they get married." That was her
boyfriend, but I didn't invite them for the
wedding,
because I was a month, it was a friend. You know,
she used to go and dance, you know? So I said,
"All
right." He come down. So they took a taxi, them
two, and we took a taxi, us two, and best man and,
you know, the lady. And we went to City Hall. So
after we got married, after we took the license
downstairs. So we was ready to go up, you know, to
the, what you call it? The chapel, like. I
thought

brother-
there was a priest like, uh, you know, Catholic.
Instead, now it was a Justice of the Peace. So,
anyway, we got married in the City Hall. My
in-law was there, and my sister, when we took the
license, and then he turned to her, and he said,
"What do you say, we're going to take the license,
too?" And my sister said, "All right." So they
took
the license, and three weeks after they got
married.
So, so we lived together three weeks after I got
married, to my sister, and then she got married, so
she live on 39th Street.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How did you celebrate your marriage?

the
PARACHINI: Oh, celebrate? This man happened to be the one,
piano player, like, the cousin. He know, he know a
they
place, those, those rooms, they have a room, and
uh,
have a restaurant on the bottom, what they call,
he
anyway, you know, this lady, she can take. So we,
advise her to go there, so we was about, uh, I
don't
know, sixteen, eighteen people for lunch.

LEVINE: Oh.

a
PARACHINI: You know. And that people, they have a son, he was

photographer, he took the picture. And the album . . .

LEVINE: Oh, good. We'll . . .

PARACHINI: The album is the photograph. It's not that picture.

I mean, from when we got married, you know. I went to the, you know, the photograph place.

LEVINE: Yes.

PARACHINI: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you had a big lunch celebration.

PARACHINI: Yeah, we had a big lunch. I remember, I don't know much, it was three. Oh, my, my husband after said, "Look, I thought maybe Izeni[ph] can do the dinner, you know?" But there was not the proper place, you know, small place. And, uh, he said, when they decide, we make a, what you call, engagement, before.

I
buy the wine, to make the engagement party a little
there,
before, you know, the wedding." And then over
you know, he paid the dinner. And he, he told me,
the
"If you go, if you want to go to the bank and get
money for the dinner, otherwise I close the book."

see
got
He have no money. He was not two years he would
her. He come here at the end of '21, and '23 we
married, then you don't have much money, you know.

LEVINE: Right.

I
my
can't
PARACHINI: So I went to the bank, I get a hundred dollars, a
hundred dollars, pay the dinner then. And . . .
(she laughs) And then the first hundred dollars
put it in my book. But when it came to Christmas
time, the end of the year, so I change, and I put
book with his book, he got a couple of hundred
dollars, you know. It was two years here, you
have no money, you know. You can save money.

LEVINE: What was he doing for work?

seventeen
married
we
the
PARACHINI: He was a busboy then. When I got married, he was a
busboy. He used to make ten dollars a week. And I
used to work in the Automat I used to make
or eighteen or nineteen. So, and when I get
I have about, not a thousand, but about. But when
get married, to put up, to clean the apartment,
because we kept the apartment, but we have to buy
furniture, the linoleum, you know. He have three

the
money
two
good
go.

hundred dollars, and he spend, you know, to clean that apartment. So I went, when it was time for dinner, he said not much money. If I take the in the bank. I said, you know, so I went to get it in my bank, the first two hundred dollar, I put it back. And then on New Year I get a book with the name, that's all, with a few dollars. He was a man. He was not a big talker, you know, and very little. I did everything. In fact, he never go in the bank, he never go no place. I always have to

LEVINE: Did you become a citizen?

he
they
home."
don't
start

PARACHINI: Oh, me? He became a citizen. I don't know. When came, but he was failed the first time when he went for the examination. Because he don't remember, asked the question, what holiday is the Fourth of July? I still remember, huh? And he can't say "Independence Day." I guess he studied but, you know, he forgot. So they said, "You better go And then three months they call him again, they ask the same question. He passed. But then I

paper,
Europe,
kids
call
can't
can't

my card, you know, I took that. So my citizen
I have June 1, 1936. Because I was going to
and we took, I don't want to go Italian, you know.
Because, I say, there was, like, a war, you know, I
said I don't want to have trouble, you know, two
with me alone, you know? And, uh, so, what you
it? I wait, I was on the way to get the citizen
paper, and they make, I can make citizen, they
make the passport without the citizen papers. The
agency man, he wrote that, you know, for me to have
the passport, no, the citizen paper to make the,
because if you don't have the citizen paper you
make the passport. So then I went home with two
girls.

LEVINE: How did you feel about becoming a citizen?

reach
then,
took,

PARACHINI: Oh, I'm the big boss, like, strong. Oh, when I
there, it was the water, Abyssinian, you know,
Spanish war, like, you know? And, uh, we was the
first one on the boat with the cord, when they
they take away the rope, we was there. It was, you
know, sure. I was American. I was, me and my two
daughters, first to get off to the boat, and the

never
be
me.

first to get in. Always, always be the first,
make way for nobody. If I had an appointment, you
sure, I wait for you. You don't have to wait for
(she laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, um, how, what was it like being a
boarder before you . . .

to
and

PARACHINI: Ah, to be a boarder. Well, then you have the place
to go and sleep, but you don't live there because I
used to work on the food, like, you know, you used
eat there, you know. Used to go home and sleep,
then get up and go to work. And better, you know.

have

LEVINE: You didn't have that much time, you didn't, uh,
a real social life, did you?

you.

PARACHINI: No, no, no. No social time at all. I'm telling
Three years before I come back to the city I was in
the Bronx in that place, you know, when I went to
nanny. So, I told you, I used to take the city
to school, three boy and two girls.

years

LEVINE: Was that a hard time for you, those first three

when you were working as a nanny?

Very, PARACHINI: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. Very hard, very hard.

didn't very hard. Now I know was very hard. Then I

know, because I was young, you know. And my boss, she was a piano teacher, a very good piano teacher, you know. And she used to shop, and she used to cook. Got no complaints, lot of food, but a lot of work. She used to give you concerts, with three pianos in the parlor. You got to keep clean, you

got

bath

to, three flight of stairs in that house. Four

to keep clean. Not nanny, baby, children, everything. I tell you, except not to be a wife.

LEVINE: And what were you making at that job? Do you remember?

you PARACHINI: If I remember? Sixteen dollars a month I started, and then eighteen, and then they raised to twenty-two. I was not going to tell you, but, and then,

know, I was not thinking. I used to put the money there. I never buy clothes. I never go out. And, so only house, you know, clothes. I used to put my money there. So when it's time to come home, I

have

to

a hundred dollars. So when I came home I give it

And my uncle. I say, "That's the money, I got it."
years, when I open the bankbook. So, he said, "Three
my so much? You should have five or six hundred
around, dollars." In fact, he wants to look for a lawyer,
uncle. But the sons, he got a couple of sons
he said, "Pop," he said, "don't start with lawyers,
because it's not enough, you know, it doesn't pay."
Anyway, three years I come home with a hundred
dollars, a lot of work and a lot of scrubbing. A
lot of washing. She don't believe in Clorox, she don't
to believe in laundry because they was dirty. I have
bed, do it, and keep clean four beds. Them two, big
sixteen, a boy, two girls, and mine. Four beds, and
seventeen, twenty now, not even. Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember when you first came here, when you
first came to America, were there some things that
lots you had never seen before? There must have been
this of things that were new to you and different, in
on country, that you never saw in your little town or
your way to here.

PARACHINI: I'm telling you the truth, in my country, I never

I went on the city around, before to come here, when
left, I leave from here, you know, to come over. I
just went to the city for the passport, you know,
and
horse,
that's all. I don't know, we used to use the
you know, with the carriage. We used to go when we
need it, you know. But I never went to, you know,
no
place, you know? And, uh . . .

lot
LEVINE: So a lot of things must have been new for you. A
of things that you saw at first must have been
different, and . . .

PARACHINI: It's nothing, it's nothing. They knew, when I was,
here
when I come here I have a low shoes like we have
here,
now. When I came, my, from Italy. When I come
in fact, I have a picture, if it's easy to see, and
they bought me, no, they dress me up, you know, new
clothes. And with the shoes with the laces, you
know? They used to call it stivalli[ph], you know,
like the boots. So being the style is backward
here,
it was more advanced over there than over here.
That's true.

LEVINE: Now, when you look back on it now, when you

look . . .

PARACHINI: It's the picture here but I, you know, I can't see, you know, exactly.

LEVINE: We're just, we have a few minutes left on the tape. If you could tell me, um, what do you think now? When you look back, you were sixteen years old, you wanted to come to America and you came here and you lived out your life here. How do you feel about that? How do you think about . . .

I'm
sewing.

PARACHINI: Well, in the beginning I feel lonesome, you know, feeling I miss my mother. When I used to go home from work, I work one month on Fifth Avenue, Every time I come home, I used to watch, look the letter box and, you know, I was crying, you know? And, so, and . . .

LEVINE: And when did it change for you? When did you start liking being in America? When did you stop being homesick, and . . .

PARACHINI: Oh, when I stopped homesick?

LEVINE: When did your life get better here?

PARACHINI: Well, when you got your own family, you know, the husband, the, you know, then the family. When my kids were small, it was like a flower, especially

that first one, the mother of this one you're
talking
she
about, the older one. She was three months old,
she
was crying because I change, I used to feed, you
know, breastfeed it, and she was crying all the
time,
I used to go to the doctor, I used to say this cry.
Say, I don't care she cry, but the baby gain. So
was
crying. And then my aunt, well, my husband used to
live boarder when he come in. That's his aunt.
And
she said, "Why don't you give some food to this
baby,
give some pastina Carusa[ph]?" You remember, now
it's Ronzoni, but it's very fine pastina, very,
very,
very small. Say, "Why don't you make a pastina?"
So
I used to cook pastina, I used to make, say, a
coffee
cup, you know, say, maybe, half a cup, and with the
Oh,
spoon, I used to give her the tip of the spoon.
she got, she was rosy cheeked. Everybody, you
know,
I was small, and the baby get so big, and the
people
used to carry in my arm, they used to get, "But
what
you give to eat this baby?" She was like a flower.
I went to Europe. You've got to see! She was
three,

walker, and my husband's family, they have, they got all
stone plant in the entrance, like, you know,
like a sidewalk, all stone. She was tripping and
tape falling down all the time. Mama, Mama, Mama. (
ends without slate)

- 1 -

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